



Fishing Vessel Safety Alert

01-99

Capsize/Sinking Advisory



The Coast Guard Fishing Vessel Safety Alert program was created to help prevent loss of life from commercial fishing vessels by providing timely notification to fishermen about “Lessons Learned” from fishing vessel casualties.

Incident: Approximately 28 (tuna) fishing vessels were operating in close proximity 1,100 miles off the California coast, when a faint Mayday with partial position was heard by several of the boats on Channel 16 & 72. A roll call of the fleet, which took several hours to complete, revealed that one vessel with two crewmembers aboard failed to respond. The closest boat, approximately 20 miles away, proceeded in 15-20 foot seas and 35-45 knot winds to the suspected Mayday location and found a large debris field and the overturned hull. Other fishing boats and the Coast Guard aircraft from Alaska, Hawaii and California joined a multi-day search for the missing crew. Later, the overturned inflated life was found, but no survivors.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

While the cause of this accident is unknown at this time, and will likely remain a mystery, there are some actions or “Lessons Learned” noted below that may have changed the outcome of this tragic accident

1. Always test your EPIRB and inspect its hydrostatic release prior to leaving port. Although an EPIRB was on board this boat, no signal was received.
2. If conditions are serious enough to send a distress signal, turn on your EPIRB at the same time and take it with you when you abandon ship to minimize the chance of it becoming fouled in rigging.
3. Inspect your survival suits and practice donning them prior to leaving port to ensure zippers work and the suits fit properly. When the weather turns foul move survival suits to a ready-to-use location on the boat.
4. Test your high water alarm circuits and inspect the integrity of all weather/watertight openings prior to leaving port. When underway, especially in rough weather, frequently inspect spaces with through-hull fittings, machinery spaces, and spaces with non-watertight hatches.
5. Always be aware of the vessel’s stability limits and be alert for signs of instability.
6. Ensure that master and crew are familiar with the use and location of all safety equipment and safety instructions.

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